

Destiny

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Summary: Becoming the next Fall Maiden was Pyrrha's destiny...or was it? What if Professor Ozpin was wrong, and Pyrrha's true destiny lay far beyond the Battle for Beacon?

Destiny

****Spoilers if you haven't watched the most recent season! I can't stand what happened to Pyrrha, so I've written my own head canon for her. It makes me feel better about everything, so I'm hoping that maybe it can do the same for you, as well.****

****I think I'll go back to happy writing after this - too much sadness in volume 3!****

* * *

><p>Do you believe in destiny?

Yes.

Her ears were ringing...a deafening wall of sound that blocked out all others. The sheer volume was so disorienting it brought both of her hands to cover her ears while her eyes remained squeezed tightly shut - praying for the noise to pass. Eventually, as her heart rate began to slow, the ringing began to fade into the background - this, in turn, made room for other sounds to enter her ears. Or at least...for the absence of other sounds to make itself known to her.

Compared to the raging sounds of battle she'd just been living in, the world surrounding her was now suspiciously quiet. Slowly opening her eyes, she blinked repeatedly in hopes they would quickly adjust to the sudden influx of light.

When her vision began to clear itself of black spots, she quickly

pushed off her knees to retake her feet, spinning in a circle as she looked in surprise at the world in front of her.

The rooftop of Beacon's tower, torn apart by battle, was gone.

The Grimm - gone.

Emergency alarms - gone.

Cinder...gone.

The chaos of war had been replaced by tranquility in the form of stillness. She was now standing in a relatively non-descript room - it could be a classroom, albeit without any tables, windows, or chairs. Everything was a shade of tan or white, making it one of the most monochrome rooms she'd even seen. The only real items to take note of were two doors, one to her left and one to her right, neither with any indication of where they would lead.

How had she gotten here? As far as she knew, she'd never been here before...and the last thing she remembered was -

One hand flew to her chest - fingers quickly running across her skin where there should have been - where the arrow had been...

But there was nothing. There wasn't a single mark on her or her armor which would suggest she'd just been through a massive battle, yet she was remembering the fight more and more clearly with each passing second. Making matters even more confusing, she felt perfectly fine even though she could have sworn that Cinder had managed to hit her more than once. As more cobwebs cleared from her memory, she could even distinctly remember pulling a broken arrow from her heel...

Carefully pulling off one of her boots, she immediately gasped and dropped the item on the ground as if it had burned her. It was there, just where she'd imagined it - a scar...an inflamed red that stood out against the pale skin on her ankle.

But how had it -

Glancing away from her heel, she cried out in shock when her eye caught upon another mark - this one standing out on her chest, precisely above her heart.

But it hadn't just been there. How had it suddenly appeared?

Tracing her fingertips along the mark, the raised edges of barely healed skin confirmed that her eyes weren't playing a trick on her. The scar itself felt hot to the touch, as if the same fire that had burned in Cinder's eyes had scorched itself into her chest.

Moisture began building in her eyes as she stared down at the mark that had been branded into her.

She had been -

No.

No, she couldn't have. She couldn't have...died.

Grabbing her discarded boot in an attempt to hide the mark, she paused for a half second before quickly shoving her foot inside and covering her face with both hands. One giant tear spilled from her eye at what she'd just seen - followed by another tear, and another.

There was no denying what her fully returned memories were telling her - crystal clear flashbacks which were proven by every cut and scorch mark now reflecting on her once perfect armor. It was as if the mere process of recalling her final moments was re-tracing her injuries upon her.

A few sobs escaped to accompany her tears as she struggled to come to terms with the revelation.

She'd tried her hardest...she'd tried her best to save those she cared about. But...this was what she'd been expecting, wasn't it?

Running into battle against one of the four maidens...she'd known that she had little to no chance of surviving, especially if their power was as great as Professor Ozpin had suggested. She'd never expected to win that fight...and in a battle of life and death, if you don't win, youâ€¦|

That's why she'd kissed -

That was something she'd wanted to do before -

Jolting at a sudden noise to her right, she spun towards the sound while reaching for Mil³ and Ako^o - only to discover that her weapons were missing. It was with no means of defense that she watched as the door quickly opened, allowing a well-dressed, confident-looking man to enter.

Closing the door quietly behind him, he turned in her direction and strode purposefully over to her - causing her to resume a mildly combative posture out of uncertainty.

"Welcome, Miss Nikos," he spoke as he came to a stop several feet in front of her, clasping his hands together in front of his waist while giving her the faintest hint of a smile. "It didn't take long for you to remember the end, I see."

"Who are you?" she immediately asked in return, feeling a rising level of fear creep into her veins.

This was an unknown place, this was an unknown person, and she had no weapon to speak of. On top of that, she could feel nothing of her semblance - not a trace of metal in the vicinity. So even though the man's demeanor was not at all threatening, she remained cautious anyway.

"Who I am isn't of importance right now," he answered, sharing with her another miniscule smile that put some level of ease back into her thoughts. "What's important is who you are, or rather, who you will be."

The comment was confusing in its conviction - the man seeming to know

much more about her than he should upon first introduction. But if there was any way to describe the man, it was by his certainty - an ingrained confidence which must have been built through years of always being right. So even though her rational thoughts told her that he couldn't possibly know who she was, the way he spoke caused her to doubt...

"I...excuse me?" she sputtered as her mind frantically tried to figure out what was going on - tried to determine whether or not she should trust this man.

"Miss Nikos, what does someone with power fear?" he asked, taking a step forward that made her take a step back to match.

"How do you know my name?"

"Someone with more power," he quickly answered for her, while ignoring her own question.

As she stared at him in utter confusion, he seemed to decide that continuing forward would be better than answering her questions at this point. Turning to one side and clasping his hands behind his back, he began pacing a short distance in front of her.

"Several days ago, you would have sworn that the most powerful person in the world was an exceptionally skillful huntsman or huntress, correct?"

Even though the question seemed rhetorical and she still had no idea what was going on, she nodded her head dumbly in response.

"Then, a day ago, you would have said that the four Maidens were the most powerful beings in the world, correct? But I ask you, Miss Nikos, how did the Maidens receive their power?"

Blinking as her mind struggled to catch up, she recalled the story which had been told to her many times while she was just a child, and reiterated to her what now felt like a lifetime ago. Swallowing thickly, finding her mouth much drier than normal, she opened her mouth to respond.

"The wizard -"

"The wizard gave the Maidens their power," the man cut in, temporarily halting his walk while continuing his train of thought, gesturing his hands for emphasis. "A man who was able to give four young girls an incredible source of power...wouldn't he be someone to be feared?"

"Not if he used that power for good," she immediately replied, the constant dialog helping unstiffen the fearful paralysis she'd started this conversation in.

Nodding in apparent appreciation of her participation, the man raised one hand to his chin, as if in great thought, before he continued.

"But how did the wizard gain his power, Miss Nikos? By reason, we should assume that someone had granted him power greater than all four Maidens combined. And someone else must have given that person

the power which was used to grant the wizard his power. And someone even more powerful must have -"

Waving her hand to gently catch his attention, she was able to cease the man's list before it dissolved into a never ending string of possibilities.

"I understand," she said, realizing that the man's incessant questions had succeeded in causing her to lower her guard enough to fully engage in the conversation. "But what does any of this have to do with me?"

The question caused his eyes to snap directly to hers, staring at her with an intensity that seemed to extend far deeper than the deepest depths of the ocean.

"Do you know why you're here?"

The unexpected question again threw her off guard, causing her even more uncertainty while she tried to sputter through a response.

"Well, I guess because I...I died -"

The word felt like a knife stabbed through her heart - bringing back all of the despair she'd felt just moments earlier.

"But why did you die?" the man pressed, not allowing her more than a half second to mourn her own demise.

Lightly sighing at his continued questioning, she decided that he must be harmless and she would just play along with whatever game of question and answer he was playing. It wasn't as if she had anywhere else to be anyway...

Focusing more energy upon her final moments, she was able to re-live the fight on the rooftop with pristine clarity. The last few seconds in particular were now vividly imprinted in her mind - the smirk her opponent had been wearing...the arrow pointed towards her heart...

"Because I fought a battle and lost," she answered forlornly, gesturing one hand towards the scar still lingering upon her chest as proof of her words.

"But why did you fight that battle?" the man asked.

"She'd stolen the Fall Maiden's power - she needed to be stopped."

"Why did she need to be stopped?" he countered, still calmly clasping his hands together while interrogating her.

"Because," she replied tersely, beginning to feel the slightest bit of agitation from the questions which appeared to have no purpose. "She was dangerous - she was going to hurt innocent people."

"But why were you the one who chose to try to stop her?"

"Because I could try!"

The air seemed to stand still as her exclamation reverberated in this ephemeral space, lasting far beyond the last syllable leaving her lips. The man didn't even blink in response, but rather remained quite still - watching her with eyes that seemed to see right through her fragile shell.

Tears were again welling in her eyes as the consequence of her final decision began to settle itself upon her heart - weighing her down with the knowledge that she'd failed in her ultimate goal...in her 'destiny'...when people had needed her most.

All of the training, all of the competitions...what had been the purpose when she hadn't been able to save the ones she loved? When she hadn't been able to prevent innocent lives from being lost? For her entire life, she'd believed deep down that the sacrifices she made in the name of Remnant would count for something. She'd believed that with enough training, she could make a difference...that she could change the worldâ€|

That she could be a hero.

"You were next in line to receive the Fall Maiden's power," the man finally stated matter-of-factly, as if easing them back into conversation after her emotional outburst.

"Supposedly," she whispered in return, staring at the ground in order to avoid the man's gaze, watching one tear drop onto the top of her boot - creating a glistening spot of moisture where it landed.

"Wrong."

The word brought her eyes instantly upward, finding that the man now had another small smile playing on his lips - appearing modestly amused by her unabashed incredulity.

"But Professor Ozpin -"

"Professor Ozpin was wrong," he stated calmly. "Close, but wrong."

As she continued to gape at him in surprise, he decided that he would continue in his explanation - turning again to one side in order to resume a slow pace in front of her.

"Your compassion, your humility, your combat prowess, all would have made you an excellent Maiden," he began, words far too earnest for her to fully accept. "You would have unlocked a source of power unlike any Maiden since the First Four. Your grace and benevolence would have translated into war-ending strength."

"The only success I've achieved has been with the help of othersâ€|" she murmured, turning away from the praise which she had done nothing to earn, certainly not on her own volition. It was only through her mentors, her teammates, her friends, that she'd been able to grow into the fighter she'd become.

But her response only seemed to prove the man's point, causing him to nod his head once in approval when she finally turned back to

him.

"Your parents raised you to be a warrior. Professor Ozpin trained you to be a Maiden. But your fate, your destiny, lies in neither of those paths."

"Then...what is it?" she asked, no, implored him to tell her. "What is it I'm supposed to do?"

All she had been thinking about the past few days was destiny - whether or not it existed, whether or not she could fulfill hers - whatever it may be.

But the only response she received was a calculated gaze, one which was only broken when the man resumed pacing - clearly unwilling to answer the question at this moment.

"What Miss Fall doesn't realize is that a Maiden's power is rooted in good, not evil..." the man mused, mostly to himself.

The comment drew her thoughts back to the battle at Beacon as her heavy heart lowered her gaze to the floor once more.

Why had she returned to the tower by herself? She'd felt such a strong calling...as if that was where she was meant to be. But she could have run away with Jaune. They could have gone to the airships and waited for the trained huntsmen to return. She could have allowed the grownups to take over the situation.

But what if they'd been too late? Who knew how long it would take for them to fight their way to the tower...and whatever Cinder had planned next might have only taken a few minutes to initialize...

Sensing a nearby presence, she raised her head only to take a quick step back when she found the man standing directly in front of her, peering down at her while she'd been staring at the ground.

"You believe you made the wrong decision?" he asked.

Letting out a big sigh, she decided that there was no point in being anything but truthful at this point.

"I believe I failed my friends, my family," she replied, again feeling a sharp stab of pain as she thought of how her family would react to the news that she was gone. Her father in particular would be crushed...

Non-perturbed by her solemn response, the man made a wide, sweeping motion with one hand as if clearing the air of invisible cobwebs. But, much to her amazement, the air beside them actually began to swirl and sway, appearing like clouds being ushered away on a windy day. In no time at all a large oval had appeared, suspended in the air beside them - held up by nothing at all. Through it, clear as day, were Beacon's grounds - currently being viewed from a great distance, but immediately recognizable all the same.

"You believe that you should have run, that you shouldn't have followed Miss Fall," the man stated plainly, as if he'd just seen into her thoughts. "If you had chosen that path, things would have

played out...much differently."

As she watched the image on the floating looking glass, the giant, flying Grimm circled the tower several times, continuing to drop more Grimm onto the courtyards below as if flew. After several more laps had been completed, the creature finally landed atop the tower, rustling its feet while causing giant boulders to break off the building and crash to the ground far below. The Grimm then raised its head towards the sky, opened its giant beak and screamed - a high pitched sound that caused her to shudder even from this distant terrain.

At first, it seemed like the creature was screeching just to mark its territory. That was, however, until black dots began to appear on the horizon. Taking a step closer to the viewing portal, she squinted her eyes in an effort to make sure her eyes weren't playing tricks on her.

It wasn't a trick.

The dots grew larger and larger as they approached Beacon's grounds - winged Grimm nearly the same size as the one now resting atop the tower. It didn't appear as if these creatures were dropping the giant droplets of black sludge that transformed into more Grimm, but...they more than made up for that by their sheer size and number.

From her combat training, she'd been coached repetitively on how to size up opponents - how to determine whether a battle was worth fighting or fleeing from. It was with this knowledge that she could say, with absolute certainty, that this level of...invasion...would require the assistance of every possible huntsman and huntress available. And even then, they might still lose.

"How are there so many?" she whispered in dismay, covering her mouth in horror as the beasts swept through the airship landing - ripping through every vessel which had not yet managed to take flight and catching others in midair.

As several of the monsters stayed behind to wipe out the remaining survivors, the greater horde continued flying towards the spire. Within seconds, they had descended upon it, forcing her to turn away while they began systematically destroying what was left of Beacon - clawing up the buildings to create perches while snatching up any remaining civilians who hadn't made it out.

"They've been in hiding - a...hibernation of sorts. It appears as if Miss Fall and her colleagues were able to awaken their queen."

The imagery disappeared from her peripheral vision then, allowing her to turn back towards the stranger with even more questions than she had received answers to.

If this was what happened if she hadn't fought Cinder then...at least she'd done the right thing? She'd made the best choice of the decisions which had been available to her?

That knowledge only made the outcome marginally easier to swallow.

Staring blankly at the space where the portal had just been, she

could feel moisture again collecting in her eyes - this time under enough control that she didn't allow any tears to fall...yet.

"Will I ever see them again?" she asked softly, not bothering to specify who 'they' were - knowing that the man would just know.

"You can see them right now," he replied, gesturing one hand delicately to the space in between them.

The air between them began to shift and shimmer once more, becoming more solid as another pane of glass appeared - this time completely separating the man from her vision. Immediately gasping at what she saw, she took a step forward, hesitantly, as if sudden movement might scare the image away.

Ruby...passed out on the rooftop where she'd just been fighting - the enormous monster somehow frozen to the ledge beside her.

Before she could even begin to wonder when Ruby had gotten to the top of the tower, the picture had changed to focus on Weiss, in the courtyard below, fighting off some straggling Grimm. The girl was joined suddenly by the appearance of the man, Qrow, who helped her beat back the remaining creatures. Both of them were calling for someone, and it only took her several seconds to realize that they were calling Ruby's name over and over again - Weiss' eyes frantically returning to the rooftop every other second.

The tears burned hotter behind her eyes as their view shifted to the airship landing. There, her teammates were being beckoned into an airship that was waiting for them.

And Jauneâ€¦|

Stepping an inch closer, she reached one hand towards the window as if she might be able to reach through and touch her former partner on the shoulder.

Jaune was struggling against the soldier trying to shove him aboard. He was shouting and trying to break away, gesturing his sword towards the tower - the tower where they'd spent their last moments together. The sight of him broke her heart...seeing him drop his sword and shield in an effort to slip away from his pursuers...only to finally be corralled by Ren and Nora before he could run back to the tower with no weapon at all.

As the boy was dragged, disheartenedly, aboard the ship, Ren and Nora turned back - looking forlornly towards the highest point on Beacon's campus before finally climbing aboard. When the ship lifted off the deck, the image faded away to reveal the man still standing patiently in front of her.

Burying her face in her hands, she finally allowed the tears to fall - she allowed the soft sobs to slip past her lips.

They were alive. There wasn't much more she could ask for...

"Your mortal life was not lived in vain, Pyrrha Nikos," the man said, tone taking on a softness that seemed to span worlds in its compassion. "Your actions saved the lives of countless innocent people, not to mention your teammates and friends."

"But whoever was behind this...is still out there -"

"And your friends are still alive to find them - to bring them to justice," he interrupted, cutting off her blossoming thread of regret. "Your decision has set in motion a series of events that could drastically swing the war in their favor. From Miss Rose discovering a skill which has not been seen in hundreds of years, to your partner, Mr. Arc, fully unlocking an aura honed through generations of valiant warriors - your death has given those closest to you power and motivation beyond their young years."

Rubbing her eyes of tears, she raised her head and took several long, shaky breaths to collect herself.

He was right - they were strong beyond their years, all of them. She'd felt Jaune's aura. She'd sparred with Ruby. She'd arm wrestled Nora. She knew that they were good fighters and would be great, butâ€¦|

"Don't worry that you're not there to help them," he said, this time answering her concern before it even entered her thoughts. "You will still help them...from here."

"But...how?"

He certainly had her attention now, as she had absolutely no idea how she could help her teammates from...from wherever she was.

Straightening his posture, the man again clasped his hands behind his back with a hint of a smile.

"A stray breeze, an unanticipated bounty, a single cloud covering the rays of the sun - you'll help them in ways they will give thanks for...though they might not know that it was you who provided their aid."

Sensing her confusion, he carried on.

"From here, you will shape the future of this world far beyond this time, but, beginning with the war currently brewing upon the horizon."

Seamlessly summoning another portal beside them, she was now watching Ruby, Jaune, Nora, and Ren trek through a snowy forest, weapons slung on their backs and bags in tow. Clearly setting off on a mission - to where and for what, she did not know. But just seeing them...she could feel the burning desire to be by their side, to be helping them in this quest, whatever it may be.

"Fortunately for your earthly friends, Luck is now on their side."

Turning away from the image, she found the man smiling at her fondly, seeming to appreciate what had just transpired between them. Although she didn't understand what it was he was truly trying to tell her, she somehow sensed that everything would be explained...in time.

"You are not free of battle, Miss Nikos," he said with a gesture towards the portal. "You've merely entered another realm of it. I shall teach you what you need to know, but the rest will be up to you to figure out. I will give you the keys, but you must find the locks they go to - if it is, in fact, locks that they should be used for."

Turning back towards her friends, she could feel the desire to help them overrule any other feeling she'd had up until this moment.

The past couldn't be undone. The hands of the clock couldn't be unwound. But if there was still a chance that she could help in some way, she would jump at the opportunity.

"I'll do it, whatever it takes," she finally said, feeling determination creep back into her bones. "But...why are you helping me?"

Not that she didn't appreciate the assistance - it was just curious to her that it was being offered by a complete stranger.

"Because it is my duty," he replied matter-of-factly. "I am the only one who has been deemed impartial. I care not who wins or loses. I care not who lives or dies. As such, it has become my responsibility to provide my unbiased aid in welcoming you to this plateau."

"And who are you?" she asked once more, hoping that this time she would receive an answer.

He smiled at the question, as if it was particularly pleasing to him that she had not yet figured it out.

"I am the cause of human failure, and human triumph. I am cursed repeatedly, and praised incessantly. No moment escapes me, just like no man escapes me -"

As he spoke in riddles - riddles she'd heard before - she felt her eyes widen in awe before she revealed his identity.

"You're Time," she answered, receiving a confirming nod in response.

"I've been here since the beginning - and I'll be here at the end," he stated with an almost proud smile.

"Then you've seen how this ends," she said, glancing at him in naive hope that he might give her insight into just what that ending might be. But he merely gave her a thin smile in return.

"I've seen every possible conclusion to every possible decision, but the outcome still depends upon you...upon your friends," he replied, gesturing towards the portal which was still open beside them. "I can show you success and failure - either outcome is the result of both your work here as well as their success there."

Sighing at the lack of a concrete answer, she glanced again at her friends - still wondering just how she was supposed to help them from here. She was standing in the presence of the man who literally controlled the fabric that allowed every one of them to continue living, and somehow she was the one supposed to help decide this

war?

It seemed impossible.

But, then again, so had the Maidens when she'd first been told they were real...

"If you're Time, who's more powerful than you?" she joked half-heartedly, not really expecting an answer as she turned away from her friends. But he smiled at her facetious question, eyes crinkling at the edges in a display of true happiness that she'd actually been paying attention to his words.

"You will do well here, Pyrrha," he replied, for once using just her first name as he took a step away from her.

"And, as to your question, I shall tell you I care not who is more powerful than I. All I care is that regardless of the outcome which may come to pass - regardless of how long, tedious, or discouraging the journey may become - we keep moving forward."

With that, he gave her one more smile and turned away from her, towards the door opposite of the one through which he'd entered. Gesturing back to her once, the man walked away from her, knowing, in his omniscient power, that she would follow.

Taking one last look at the portal which had remained open, she smiled at the image of Nora hanging upside down from a tree - the girl unknowingly about to be hit in the back of the head by the snowball Ruby was packing in her hands.

Tearing her eyes away only after Nora had fallen to the snowy ground in surprise, she joined the man at the still-closed door - ready for whatever was to come next.

When she gave him a nod, he reached out and pulled the door open for her to exit first. Her eyes widened when she saw what had been concealed behind the walls of the tiny room - realizing that nothing in all of her worldly training had prepared her for this.

But uncertainty didn't prevent her from taking a step forward - into her new role, into her new life.

End
file.